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COUNTRY Anglo-Egyptian Sudan

SUBJECT Formation and Disintegration of the
Sudanese Delegation to Cairo
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1. The origin of the National Front coalition dates back to March 1946 when, under the auspices of the Sudan Graduates' General Congress, the four parties in the National Front agreed to participate in sending a delegation to Cairo. This delegation emphasized the patriotic duty of every Sudanese to be united with his Egyptian brother in the union of the Nile Valley. In September 1947 the first signs of disagreement were manifest when Yahya Fadli, Secretary-General of the Ashiqqa Party and the chief representative of that party in the delegation, was accused by some members of using his political influence to effect corrupt trade practices. Following the request that Fadli resign from the delegation, 'Ali Bireir and certain others also wanted to withdraw. Thereupon, on 15 November 1947 the delegation held a meeting in Cairo, at which the majority of its members voted in favor of returning to the Sudan. These included Hamid Salih, Dardiri Ahmad Ismail, Ahmad Kheir, 'Ali Bireir, and Tawfiq Ahmad Bakri. Only two members, Ismail Azhari and Muhammad Nur-al-Din, voted to continue the work of the delegation in Cairo.
2. In February 1948, Yahya Fadli was acclaimed at a gathering of the Ashiqqa Youth in Omdurman, at which he made a speech attacking the Unionist Party and the members of the delegation who had accused him of dishonest dealings in Cairo. He claimed that the accusations against him were untrue and stated that all he had done was to place the distribution of trade licenses in the Egyptian Ministry of Commerce, rather than in the Sudan Agency in Cairo. Fadli was absolved of any misconduct by the Ashiqqa Party and the Sudan Graduates' Congress, was reinstated in the Sudanese Delegation, and ordered to return to the delegation in Cairo. In an exchange of telegrams with Cairo, Azhari renewed his pledge to work until the evacuation of the Nile Valley had been completed and unity under the crown of the beloved King Faruq had been achieved.

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

- 2 -

3. Nevertheless, the delegation at this time was in a precarious position, as most of its members had either ceased all activity or had returned to the Sudan. Ahmad Muhammad Kheir, a lawyer of Wad Medani and a non-party representative, was the only non-Ashiqqa member of the delegation left in Cairo. He also disagreed with the Ashiqqa policies, attacked Azhari in the Egyptian press, and finally decided to return to Khartoum. Ibrahim Mufti, Manager of the Congress office in Cairo, was recalled to Khartoum in April 1948 to review the situation with the Ashiqqa Party and the Graduates' Congress Executive Committee.
4. Early in May 1948 an agreement was reached in Khartoum by three unionist parties of the National Front and the Graduates' Congress to reconstitute the Cairo delegation. The Unionist Party alone declined to participate, on the grounds that the delegation had outlived its usefulness, but the Unionist Party expressed its willingness to cooperate with the others in "internal activity." This coalition of the three National Front parties designated five members to form the reconstituted Cairo delegation, excluding the Unionist Party. Ismail Azhari would continue as the Graduates' Congress representative in the delegation, and would also retain the Presidency. Muhammad Nur-al-Din, 'Ali Bireir, and Hasan Tahir Zarruk would be the representatives of the Ashiqqa, the Unity of the Nile Valley, and the Liberal-Unionist Parties, respectively. The fifth member was to have been Hamid Salih, an independent. It was also planned to form a committee in Khartoum to act in a liaison capacity between the delegation and the parties; and another committee to organize and lead the Graduates' Congress and the parties in their internal struggle against "imperialist schemes."
5. This agreement, however, was short-lived, since the Unionist Party soon began to attack the Ashiqqa Party and Azhari for insisting upon maintaining a useless delegation in Cairo, whose sole purpose was to enjoy an easy life in luxurious hotels, thus avoiding the necessity of conducting the struggle at home. After explaining why the Unionist Party wanted to concentrate on internal action, the officers of the Party began publishing accounts of the lavish life of the Ashiqqa delegates, claiming that the delegation in the latter part of its stay in Egypt had lost its popularity with the Egyptian people and wanted to remain there with the sole object of leading an easy life while supporting Nuqrashi Pasha's government, in return for favors. Under the fire of the Unionist Party, the three other unity parties, which had been reconciled to the formation of a new delegation, soon engaged in a new dispute among themselves with regard to the selection of representatives. The Ashiqqa Party objected to the commercial activities of 'Ali Bireir who, thereupon, unleashed a new attack upon Azhari and his Ashiqqa comrades in the Egyptian press, by publishing articles supported by documentary evidence in order to prove that the Ashiqqa members had exploited their political position to make money through the granting of trade permits. This dispute delayed the reconstitution of the delegation until the Unity of the Nile Valley Party agreed, under pressure, to replace 'Ali Bireir with another representative.

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25X1A2g

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

- 3 -

6. On 29 May 1948, Muhammad Nur-al-Din, Vice-President of the Ashiqqa Party and newly-chosen representative of the Party in the delegation, went to Khartoum with new instructions from the Egyptian Government. He had been the chief liaison official between the Ashiqqa Party and the Egyptian Government, and during his latest contacts with Nuqrashi Pasha he had been informed that the Egyptian Government would no longer consider Ismail Azhari as the guest of the state. This amounted to eliminating the monthly allowance which Azhari had been receiving regularly from the Egyptian Government, which was estimated to be between LE 300-400. As a result, Azhari was compelled to make his own arrangements to stay at the Continental Hotel in Cairo and an advance of LE 500 was made to him in June 1948 from the Congress Education Fund. Subsequently, the Egyptian Government was reported to have restored part of this sum to him.
7. In spite of these reverses, Hasan Tahir Zarruk, the representative of the Liberal-Unionist Party, was sent early in June 1948 to join Azhari in Cairo, in an effort to salvage the remnants of the Sudanese Delegation. The Unity of the Nile Valley Party denounced the departure for Cairo of the Liberal-Unionist representative before final agreement had been reached between the three unionist parties. Retracting the earlier pledge to replace 'Ali Bireir with another representative acceptable to the Ashiqqa Party, Dardiri Ahmad Ismail, the President of the Unity of the Nile Valley Party, issued a statement to the effect that the Ashiqqa Party was not motivated by a desire for united action but wanted only to satisfy personal grudges, as shown by its objection to the appointment of 'Ali Bireir. This animosity was increased by the fact that 'Ali Bireir, who is a successful merchant in Cairo, had checked upon and revealed the corrupt commercial activities of a few Ashiqqa Party members in the delegation, who were exploiting the prestige of the delegation for their selfish motives. Furthermore, the Ashiqqa Party was accused of having accepted a new formula for united action only as a political maneuver to deceive the other National Front parties. The Unity of the Nile Valley Party announced its decision to direct its representatives in Cairo to cooperate with other national organizations within the limits of the Party's principles, but to disregard the so-called Sudanese Delegation.
8. The disintegration of the Sudanese Cairo Delegation was completed after the Unity of the Nile Valley Party's attack upon the Ashiqqa Party. The latter retaliated by attacking the leaders of the Unity of the Nile Valley Party as enemies of the national movement, repudiating all charges, exonerating Azhari and Yahya Fadli, and by renewing the abusive treatment of 'Ali Bireir. The situation remained tense throughout July and August and was accentuated by the accusations and counter-accusations of Ismail Azhari and 'Ali Bireir. On 16 July 1948 Sayyid 'Umar Khalifa 'Abdullahi, a visiting Khatmia sect leader, was requested by Egyptians to effect a reconciliation of the two antagonists. They were reported to have lunched with him in Cairo, but subsequent events proved that 'Abdullahi's efforts had not met with success.

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25X1A2g

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

- 4 -

9. Following an Ashiqqa Youth resolution to support Ismail Azhari's mission in Cairo, on 12 August 1948 a Congress Conference in Omdurman made several decisions, including unanimous approval of a motion renewing its faith in the remnants of the Sudanese Delegation headed by Azhari, and supporting his views on remaining in Cairo. On 14 August 1948 Sudanese elements in Cairo, under the leadership of 'Ali Bireir, formed the External Struggle Front, which is independent of the dissolved Sudanese Delegation, headed by Ismail Azhari.
10. In September 1948 two Sudanese pro-unity delegations left Cairo for Paris to contact the United Nations independently, with regard to the Sudan question. As anticipated, these missions were headed by Azhari and 'Ali Bireir. Trygve Lie, Secretary-General of the United Nations, received Bireir at the Chaillot Palace early in October 1948. According to press reports, Bireir demanded the unity of the Nile Valley under King Faruq and gave the Secretary-General a report on the Sudan question. The latter promised to study the question and to make a special file on it. Bireir's delegation also visited General de Gaulle. Upon his return to Cairo, Bireir said that his mission had contacted thirty delegations in Paris. Ismail Azhari's mission was engaged in similar activities in Paris, and on 6 October 1948 he left Paris for the Sudan, where he planned to attend the Sudan Graduates' Congress elections. He left two Ashiqqa colleagues in Paris to continue his work.

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